

THE ART OF BEER

Warming Your Spirit

By **DON TSE**

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The long, lazy days of summer are behind us. As sunset comes earlier each day and temperatures start to drop, our thoughts turn to warming the body and the spirit. It's the time of year when our favorite breweries start releasing their winter warmers.

While winter warmer is not a well-defined beer style, winter warmers are generally darker ales with solid maltiness and minimal hop presence. They often have aromas that are reminiscent of the holiday season, usually because they have been brewed with spices associated with this time of year. Cinnamon and nutmeg are very common, but allspice, ginger and cloves may also be used. Orange peels and fruits, particularly dark fruits such as raisins, plums and dates are also sometimes used. Finally, other brewing adjuncts such as molasses, brown sugar and maple syrup — for flavor and increased alcohol — may also be used.

Anchor makes Our Special Ale with a different spice each year while other American winter warmers include Pike Auld Acquaintance, Full Sail Wassail, Harpoon Winter Warmer, Alaskan Winter Ale and Sam Adams Winter

Lager. On the other side of the pond, Samuel Smith makes Winter Welcome with label art that changes every year while other British favorites include Young's Winter Warmer and Fuller's Old Winter Ale. The spices in these beers add complexity to a full-bodied, malty beer, unlike pumpkin beers, where spice is the main character of the beer.

While these beers are very different from each other, they share at least one thing in common: they are effective, not only at tickling the tastebuds, but also at warming the spirit. These warming beers bring to mind the work of Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), the American painter most famous for his cover illustrations for *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine.

Rockwell was born in New York City, and studied art at Chase Art School, The National Academy of Design and the Art Student's League. Rockwell's career lasted over 40 years, during which he produced thousands of works and became famous for idealized portrayals of American life. In addition to *The Saturday Evening Post*, Rockwell produced work for calendars issued by the Boy Scouts of America and for publications of classic books such as *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. If you've lived in

the U.S. for more than a month, chances are, you've seen a reproduction of a Rockwell painting; they are more ubiquitous than Coca-Cola ads. In fact, Rockwell paintings were commonly used in Coca-Cola ads in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the winter season, Rockwell is perhaps best known for his idealized portrayals of Santa Claus. Indeed, works such as *Santa and Expense Book* (1920), *Santa Reading His Mail* (1935) and *Santa at the Map* (1939) helped to popularize the image of Santa as a jolly, white-bearded man with rosy cheeks. These images are so sweet, they can warm the heart of even the coldest Scrooge.

Because his works were so sentimental and so commercial, Rockwell was dismissed by many as not a true artist, but merely an illustrator. Some even coined the derogatory adjective "Rockwellesque" to describe his work. But if the purpose of art is to evoke emotion, then there is no doubt that Rockwell's work is art.

If only Rockwell could have been convinced to paint advertisements with Santa holding bottles of craft beer instead of cola, winter would have been my favorite season.